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Message Text

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45
ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 YO-14 CIAE-00 DODE-0* PM-07 H-03 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 *S-20

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FM AMEMBASS* ROME
*O SECSTATE WASHDC 2613

C O N F D E N T** A L ROME 0315

E.O.*11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, IT
SUBJECT: REFERENDUM ISSUE TAKES SPOTLIGHT

1.*BEGIN SUMMARY. RECENT CALL BY SOCIALISTS FOR CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT INITIATIVE TO AVOID SCHEDULED DIVORCE REFERENDUM THIS SPRING HAS BEEN REJECTED BY DC, RENDERING DIVORC**TEST PROBABLY INEVITABLE. RESULTING POLEMIC**SUGGEST THAT, UN* SS DETER*ORATION OF ECONOMI* SITUATIO SPARKS LAST MINUTE DEAL, PSI AND COMMUNISTS WILL CONDUCT VIGOR*US PRO-DMVORCE AN*, PREDICTABLY, *NTI-DC CAMPAIG* WHILE MOR MODERATE LAY PARTI S WILL S*RIVE TO AVOID ACRO S-THE-BOARD CONFRONTATION. NEO-FASCIST MSI HAS WELCOMED PRO*PECT OF;*EFERENDU* CONTEST AND WILL SEEK TO MAKE MOST OF OPPORTUNI IES FOR POLEMICS.*END SUMMA*Y.

2. IN SIGNED NEW YEAR'S EDITORIAL *N SOCIAL* T PARTY RGAN AVANTI, PSI SECRETARY DEMARTIN HAS DEC*ARED THAT REFERENDUM SCHEDULED THIS SPRING TO REPEAL DIVORCE STATUTE CONSTITUTES GRAVE THREAT TO ITALIAN DEMOCRACY AND SERIOUS DANGER TO CENTER-LEFT STABILITY. DE MARTINO CALLED FOR EARLY PAR IAMENTARY ACTION TO INVALIDATE REFERENDUM CALL BY AMENDING DIVORCE? STATUTE, AND DEMANDED DC "B*EAK ITS CURTAIN OF SILENCE" ON ISSUE AND UNDERT*KE CONSTRUCTIVE INITIATIVES TO AVOID BITTER C NFUSION WHICH OULD "WORSEN POLITICAL CLIMATE IN MOMENT OF DANG ROUS ECONOMIC C*ISIS." DE MARTI O'S CALL FOR A DC INITIATIVE WAS SOON ECHOED BY SOCIAL DEMOCRAT PARTY SECRETARY ORLANDI. HOWEVER , BOTH
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PSDI AND REPUBLICAN PARTY SPOKESMEN EMPHASIZED THEIR BEL*EF
THAT REFEREN UM, BARRING A DC COMPROMISE PROPOSAL, IS NOW*
INEVITABLE.

3. THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT REPLY TO DE MARTINO CHALLENGE CAME IN
JANUARY 7 ARTICLE BY PARTY SECRE*ARY FANFANI IN DK THEORETICAL
JOURNAL LA DISCUSSIONE, REFLECTING*FANFANI'S VIE , EXPRESSED
*O AMBASSADOR DEC 5 (ROME 13563), THAT REFERENDUM SEEMS UNAVOIDABLE.
IN LIST OF MAJOR TASKS FACIN PARTY IN 1974, FANFANI PROMINENTLY
CITED DIVORCE REFRENNDUM WHICH, HE SAID, WILL "PREDICTABLY"
FALL BETWEEN APRIL AND JUNE THIS YEAR. CHIDING THOSE WHO HAVE
URGED THE DC*TO COME FORWARD W TH COMPROMISE PROPOSAL TO AVOID
THE DIVORCE TEST, FANFANI POINTED*OUT THAT DC IS STILL ANTI-
DIVORCE AND HAS CONSISTENTLY SUPPORTED INSTITUTION OF REFERENDUM.
THUS, ACCORDING T* FANFANI, DC HAS SHOWN GREAT SENSE
OF RESPONSIBL*TY AND DESIRE TO AVOID STIRRING UP POLEMICS
BY ITS ATTITUDE OF RESERVE ON THE SUBJE*T.

4. FANFANI'S RESPON*E EVOKED VIGOROUS*REPLY BY DEMARTI O AND
OTHER PS LEADERS WHO WARNED THAT DC MUST B AR FULL RESPONSIBILITY
FOR ITS REFUSAL TO AVOID PO*ITICAL STRUGGLE*WHICH INEVITABLY WOULD
BE "BITTER AND VIOLENT." SOCIAL DEMOCRATS AND REPUBLICANS , HOWEVER,
STRESSED THEIR LONGSTANDING VIEW TH*T GOVERNMENT STABILITY NEED
NOT BE BROUGHT INTO **NGER SHOULD ALL PARTICIPANTS APPR ACH
REFERENDUM CAMPAIGN IN MATURE AND RESPONSIBLE FASHION. PCI COMMENT
IN PARTY ORGAN L'UNITA O FANFANI ARTICLE *ARALLELS SOCIALIS 'S
REACTION, DENOUNCING DC RESPONSIBLITY FOR DRAGGING COUNTRY NTO
TEST WHICH WOULD HAVE PREDICTABLY NEGATIVE EFFECT ON POLITICAL
CLIMATE. L'UNITA EDITORIAL REAFFIRMS PCI WILLINGNESS TO REVISE
DIVORCE LAW BUT STATES THAT IF REFERENDUM COMES PCI WILL WAGE
VIGOROUS CAMPAIGN BAS ON A "GREAT Y*TI-FASCIST MOBILIZATION"
WHICH WOULD POINT FINGER AT THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR ITALY'* POLITIC L
AND ECONOMI* TROUBLES. NEO-FASCIST M*I PREDIC*ABLY REACTS
FA*ORABLY TO INCREASED LIKELIHOOD OF REFERENDUM TEST, WELCOMING
IT AS A CHANCE FOR A GOOD FIGHT ON A CLEAR CUT ISSUE. PRESIDENT
OF LIBERAL PARTY, MALAGODI, EXPRESSED LACK OF SURPRISE AT DC
ATTITUDE AND PLACED EMPHASIS ON DUTY OF PRO-DIVORCE FORCES TO
CONDUCT "FIRM BUTCIVIL CAMPAIGN."

5. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH DIVORCE STATUTE WAS PASSED OVER DC AND MSI
OPPOSITION IN LAST PARLIAMENT, INCRESED MSI REPRESENTATION
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IN PRESENT LEGISLATURE HAS ELIMINATED PREVIOUS PRO-DIVORCE
MAJORITY AND PREVENTS MODIFICATION OF LAW (OR ANY OTHER METHOD OF
PREVENTING REFERENDUM) FROM BEING IMPOSED WITHOUT DC
ACQUIESCENCE.
IN VIEW OF MATHEMATICAL REALITIES, ASSUMPTION HAS DEVELOPED ON
*OTH SIDES IN RECENT *ONTHS THAT REFERENDUM IN PROBABLY INEVITABLE.
SOURCE CLOSE TO DE MARTINO TELLS US THAT DE MARTINO STATEMENT WAS

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INTENDED TO BRING ISSUE TO HEAD, HOPEFULLY SPARKING LAST MINUTE EFFORTS TO EVADE REFERENDUM STRUGGLE, BUT, FAILING THAT, FIRING OPENING GUN OF CAMPAIGN IN WHICH SOCIALISTS INTEND TO EXERT LEADERSHIP. FANFANI'S RESPONSE WOULD APPEAR TO RULE OUT ANY DC INITIATIVES TO DISPOSE OF REFERENDUM ISSUE. INITIAL POSITIONS OF DC AND SMALLER LAY PARTIES (PSDI, PRI, PLI) DO NOT SHOW SIGNS OF DESTRUCTIVE CAMPAIGN, AND IN FACT THEY URGE RESPONSIBLE CAMPAIGN ON THE ISSUE. LEFT WING IS REACTING MORE SHARPLY, SEEMING TO THREATEN A CAMPAIGN AGAINST DC, (FOR FAILING TO AVOID REFERENDUM) RATHER THAN AGAINST SUBSTANTIVE ISSUE OF DIVORCE. THIS IS PROBABLY AN INDICATION THAT CENTER AND RIGHT OF ITALIAN POLITICAL SPECTRUM HAVE OVERCOME THEIR FEARS OF DIVORCE ISSUE TO GREATER DEGREE THAN HAVE LEFT WING.

DEGREE OF STRESS WHICH REFERENDUM PUTS ON CENTER-LEFT COALITION DEPENDS ON EVOLUTION OF ECONOMIC SITUATION IN FACE OF ENERGY CRISIS, AND STRATEGY ADOPTED BY MAJOR PROTAGONISTS (DC, PSI AND PCI) IN FACING ELECTORAL CONTEST. SOME HAVE SPECULATED THAT DC MIGHT SEEK TO PUT CENTER-LEFT FORMULA ON ICE AND RESORT TO CARETAKER, MONOCOLORE (ONE PARTY - DC) GOVERNMENT TO ADMINISTER REFERENDUM, THEREBY ATTEMPTING TO SOFTEN DIRECT IMPACT ON PRESENT COALITION FORMULA, THUS PROTECTING IT FOR FUTURE USEFULNESS. OTHERS SEE POSSIBILITY THAT FANFANI MIGHT USE REFERENDUM CAMPAIGN TO GENERATE CATHOLIC VOTER COHESION WHICH COULD THEN BE DRAWN UPON IF COALITION FAILS AND EARLY ELECTIONS BECOME NECESSARY.

ON BALANCE, HOWEVER, MOST POLITICAL LEADERS STILL CONTEND THAT REFERENDUM CONTEST, WHILE PAINFUL, NEED NOT CAUSE CRISIS FOR CURRENT COALITION GOVERNMENT. VOLPE

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